

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

RS21563

Modeled on utility advocate offices currently in place in 43 other states, the Idaho Office of Utility Consumer Advocate would help ensure all utility ratepayers (residential consumer, small business—including family farms, commercial and industrial) have fair and adequate representation in utility rate cases and other regulatory proceedings. Currently, ratepayers in Idaho may have representation if they participate as an "intervenor" in a rate case or regulatory proceeding; however, this results in certain constituencies having representation, while others go without. Providing representation tends to be costly (with limited intervenor funds available, conditional upon PUC approval at the end of a rate case), leaving many ratepayer groups unable to participate and advocate for their interests. The Idaho Public Utilities Commission is vested with power and jurisdiction to supervise and regulate every public utility in the state (IC 61-501). Creation of an Idaho Utility Consumer Advocate office would help ensure that all ratepayers are represented. This office would be under the authority of the Idaho Attorney General and would be governed by a board that includes representation from all utility ratepayer classes.

FISCAL NOTE

It is estimated that approximately \$250,000 would be required annually from the General Fund to cover the costs of operating the office, including personnel.

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